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MOUTH-WATERING: Katy Barfield, executive director of SecondBite, inspects food destined for the needy with Russell Shields, the organisation's program co-ordinator. Picture: NIKKI DAVIS JONES

Help near for hungry mouths

MICHAEL STEDMAN

Political reporter

SURPLUS food from bakeries, restaurants and other businesses will go to the needy instead of landfill under Good Samaritan legislation introduced by the State Government yesterday.

The Bill, which is expected to be supported by all parties, will allow businesses and individuals to donate food to charities without the threat of litigation.

"Unfortunately, we are a litigious society and in the past restaurant owners and bakers who have wanted to give surplus food to those most in need have often felt unable to," Premier David Bartlett said yesterday.

"I do know of cases where

businesses were throwing out bread and throwing out good nutritional food because they felt it was too risky to get it to the right place."

Mr Bartlett also announced a \$10,000 grant to allow charity organisation SecondBite to start distributing food around the state.

SecondBite executive director Katy Barfield said the scheme helped to provide nutritional food to families that would otherwise go without.

"We threw away 3.28 million tonnes of food in Australia last year and that is a phenomenal amount of food to go into landfill," Ms Barfield said.

Liberal leader Will Hodgman welcomed the policy his party has been pushing since last year.

Tasmania had been one of only two states in Australia not to have this legislative protection in place.

"But it is one small step that may make a difference to people in need," Mr Hodgman said.

The Tasmanian Council of Social Services warned the strategy was not a silver bullet to tackle poverty.

"The reality is that Tasmania has the highest rates of poverty in Australia at 16 per cent of the population, and the Premier has got to make a commitment to turn this situation around," chief executive officer Tom Muller said.

The amendments to the Civil Liability Amendment Bill 2008 will also provide protection for people offering voluntary help to the injured or sick.